

THE EYE SHIELD



Issue 35

September 2005

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MESSAGE FROM ME

Welcome to issue thirty-five of The Eye Shield. All of your Eye Shield favourites are ready and waiting for you, readers, including the second level of Toby's quest in *Adventure Time*, the thrilling continuations of *The Lord of Dreams* and *The Tower of Time*, and a visit to the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum in Sussex, which should be well-known to fans of series 5 and 6.

Also, as promised, this issue heralds the return of veteran Eye Shield reader Catherine Jackson's very own creation, the Dragon Queen. Catherine was one of the contributors for issue 1 of TES, way back in December 1995, with her first story, in which the Dragon Queen first arrived in Knightmare to help protect Smirkenorff from the evil machinations of Lord Fear. The story was continued in issue 2, in March 1996, and the sequel - *The Dragon Queen Returns* - was featured in issue 3 of TES, in June 1996. Now, in September 2005, The Eye Shield is proud to present the third installment of the *Dragon Queen* saga. My sincere thanks go out to Catherine Jackson, who took the time to write this story for me. I hope you enjoy it, readers, and hopefully it will inspire some of you to get your own creative Knightmare juices flowing.

CORRESPONDENCE

The following e-mail comes from Richard Temple.

Dear Eye Shield.

I am a big fan of Knightmare, and of this online magazine. I have contributed an article in the past (Top 15 Knightmare Villains) and I have recently started writing a Knightmare story; I was wondering if it would be any good to appear in The Eye Shield.

As I said to Richard, this is exactly the kind of thing I'm looking for to put in TES. I am still in need of truckloads of Knightmare and TES opinions for this section, and I'm always especially pleased to receive articles and stories for other parts of the fanzine. Please, use the e-mail address below and get writing! Richard's story begins next issue.

Challenge question: Which is the only series of Knightmare not to feature a jester?

REMEMBER THIS?

Series 2/3. Level 1.

THE FIRE CAVE

This challenge was set in a blue-lit cave, which contained a monstrous face hewn into the rock between two doors at the back. From each door a narrow path led towards the front of the cave, where the two paths were joined by another rocky path. This formed a pit in the centre of the cavern, into which the monstrous face breathed fire every few seconds. This fire flared up through two narrow holes that spanned the two paths leading to the doors, creating a fiery obstacle that had to be avoided.

This was quite nasty for a level one challenge, as very careful precision guidance was required in order to avoid the flames. The dungeoneer would either appear in the room through the left-hand door, and have to pass both the fiery obstacles in order to go around in a full circle and reach the exit door on the right, or they would arrive at the front end of the cave on the rocky path that linked the two walkways, in which case only one dash past the flames was required.

It was, of course, much harder for those teams who had to guide their dungeoneer through two infernos instead of one, because this made the challenge twice as hard and twice as dangerous. Having said that, the only dungeoneer actually to get scorched was Julian, the second winner from series 2, and he only had to go through one fire obstacle. This caused the loss of one life force grade. Still, things picked up from there, fortunately.

Dungeoneers Chris, Stuart and Steven passed through this challenge unscathed during the course of series 2. Their advisors sometimes started to argue about whether the dungeoneer should run or jump across the fire-hole, and when it was safe to do so, making it clear that this was a tricky challenge, despite its lack of actual scorches.

The challenge was made even harder in series 3, as Leo had to avoid a pesky skull ghost that kept blocking the paths, and Martin had some bones to trip over between the pathways. Still, they both made it through intact.

Difficulty: 6 Careful guidance was always required.

Killer Instinct: 4 Gave Julian a fairly nasty burn.

Gore Factor: 7 A reasonably impressive display.

Fairness: 6 Quite difficult for level one.

ADVENTURE TIME

In this age of heroes - which began in December 1995 - the score is Dungeon 9, Humans 4. Now let's see what further challenges await Toby in the second level.

Toby lands in a room that has five doors around a circular wall. There is a table in the vicinity of the doors, at which a red-robed figure sits. There is an empty seat opposite him.

"I see that here you have encountered Hordriss the Confuser, Toby," remarks Treguard. "Doubtless he is anxious to use his oh-so-extensive knowledge of everything to help you begin this level. Pay attention, team."

"Ah, yes, the next offering," Hordriss remarks in Toby's general direction. "Please, won't you take a seat?"

Toby's advisors direct him to the chair and he sits down. Hordriss nods approvingly.

"Now then, young adventurer, what is your name?" Hordriss asks.

"Toby," comes the reply.

"Now listen, Toby, very carefully," Hordriss advises. "The doors behind me have each been demarcated with a letter, from A to E in alphabetical order, going from the left hand to the right, which is of course on my left. I must tell you that all the doors named with vowels are deadly, as is the other one that can sometimes be applied to a road. It is also considered most perilous, of course, to go straight ahead. There now, that couldn't be clearer, could it? If you do manage to make it through, remember this: the third step is foot stamping. Now, be off with you."

Toby stands up as his advisors consider which door to take.

"We mustn't take either of the end doors," says one advisor. "They're A and E, which are vowels. The door straight ahead would be C, so it's either B or D that we need."

"It's D," states another advisor. "You get B roads, but you don't get D roads, do you?"

The advisors are happy with their choice, so Toby is directed through the second door from the right. It takes him into the level two clue room, where a bone, a gauntlet and a key are waiting for him. There is also a scroll, which Toby unrolls.

"Accept the challenge," Toby reads out. *"Unlock the path to truth."*

In the light of this, Toby is told to take the key and the gauntlet. The next room is Merlin's throne room. Toby is directed to stand in front of the pit, opposite the wizard's throne.

"You have reached a magic place, team," says Treguard. "But what steps

can you take to release that magic?"

Toby claps his hands, snaps his fingers and then stamps his foot to complete the path. When Toby has crossed the pit, Merlin appears on his throne.

"Ah, very nicely done, young Toby," the wizard commands him. "But, if you are to survive this level, you'll have to do even better. I seek two truths from you, and here is the first. He who uses it knows it not. He who makes it has no use for it. It is the dead carrying the dead. What is it?"

"A coffin," is the team's reply.

"Truth accepted," Merlin smiles warmly. "Here is the second. It can make you laugh, or it can make you cry. It can bring back the dead. It is born in an instant, but can last a lifetime. What is it?"

The team discuss this at some length, but no answer is forthcoming.

"Come on, team, lest you fail to *remember* the answer before you *forget* the question," Treguard urges them.

"A memory," Toby tells Merlin confidently, after hearing Treguard's clue.

"Truth accepted," Merlin replies. "Congratulations, Toby, you have answered both correctly. I reward you with the spell RUST. Use it wisely, for you may use it but once!"

With that, Merlin disappears. Toby's team direct him out, into a room with four doors. Three of these have portcullises blocking them, and the fourth has a golden keyhole. Before there is time to take any action, however, a transparent image of Mogdred manifests between Toby and the doors.

"Ah, greetings, Toby," Mogdred booms. "We meet at last. If you continue on this path, you are likely to meet a terrible fate. Pledge yourself to me and I will save you from the invincible terror that lies beyond this room. Do you so pledge?"

"Yet another decision, team, and it's one you must take," Treguard informs the twittering advisors. At last, they reach a decision.

"No!" Toby cries defiantly.

"Very well!" Mogdred sneers. "Then face your fate unaided!"

The image disappears. Although the meeting has clearly rattled the advisors, they direct Toby over to the door with the keyhole. He holds out the key, and is able to exit the chamber.

"Warning, team!" Treguard exclaims before the advisors have even had time to take in the features of the next chamber. "A catacombite is guarding this chamber. All contact with this creature is deadly, for it must be handled with kid gloves."

Toby faces the marauding skeletal monster that is guarding the only exit from this room. He is told to put on the gauntlet, which he does. A larger version of the gauntlet, balled into a fist, descends from the ceiling and crushes the catacombite's warped, enlarged bones to powder. Toby is then directed out, and emerges into a small cave with a large metal doorway as the only exit.

"You have almost reached the end of the level, team," Treguard congratulates them. "However, don't get too comfortable just yet."

The door rattles up to reveal the Descender beyond. However, the Automatum clanks out from the lift and into the cave, and begins to make straight for Toby.

"It looks like the Automatum has just reached his floor," Treguard chuckles chillingly. "You must deal with him, or your quest ends now."

The Automatum raises his morning star as he clanks steadily towards Toby. However, the advisors are not unduly worried.

"Spellcasting:" says the spellcaster. "R-U-S-T."

The Automatum creaks and groans, and then falls to the floor. Toby is directed into the Descender, which clanks and rattles its way downwards. It stops at a door with a frightknight's helmet emblazoned above it, through which Toby is directed. He has reached the third level.

Do Toby and team have what it takes to survive the Dungeon's toughest challenges in level three? Read the next Adventure Time to find out.

THE DRAGON QUEEN'S LAST STAND

By Catherine Jackson

It was warm summer's day. The sun had just started to set, as Treguard sat down and wiped his brow. It had been a busy few weeks, but a mate had finally been found for Smirkenorff, with the help of the Dragon Queen. She had been a constant visitor to Knightmare Castle since her powers had returned to her, and she had spent all her energy on this task; it seemed very important to her to get it done. Suddenly, the castle door burst open. It was Romahna. Her team of dragon wardens had been kept very busy guarding Smirkenorff and his mate. There had been many attempts to stop the mating by Lord Fear, but thankfully the Brollachan had been returned to his rightful place by Grimaldine, and they were both helping in the effort to guard the dragons. There had been many spells put on the Brollachan to stop anyone tampering with his memory again.

"Where is the Dragon Queen?" asked Romahna.

"She is in the other room. Sit here and rest while I get her," said Treguard.

He went into the other room. The Dragon Queen was sitting in a chair, in a kind of trance. She had done this many times, and had told Treguard that it was a way of improving her powers.

"Dragon Queen, I'm sorry to disturb..." said Treguard, but before he could finish, the Dragon Queen's eyes opened.

"I know there is something wrong," she told Treguard. "I can feel it. No matter what I say next, you must go along with it. We must put on a good performance."

Treguard looked at her strangely, but knew better than not to trust what she said. As they entered the other room, Romahna fell onto her knees.

"Stop!" said the Dragon Queen. "Please get up; there is no need for that. Please, tell us what is wrong."

"Lord Fear has been spotted approaching our nest sites, and many of my operatives have been killed or captured. I fear that Lord Fear will soon know where the mating nest is," said Romahna.

"Treguard, get the map, if you please," said the Dragon Queen, and Treguard rolled out a large old parchment. "Show where the attacks have been located," continued the Dragon Queen.

"Here, at the start of the nests," Romahna obliged, pointing at the map. "They seem to be heading towards this area of woodland."

"Good," said the Dragon Queen. "Move all the other dragons to safer nests. Use what guards you have to protect them. We will move Smirkenorff and his mate to this location." She pointed at a spot near a

mountain range. "It won't be easy for them to reach; I will make sure of it. Go now, you have a lot of work to do."

Just as Romahna was heading for the door, the Dragon Queen spoke again.

"Here, use this portal," she offered. "You will get back faster."

Romahna nodded, and in a blink she was gone, and so was the portal.

"Don't speak yet, Treguard," said the Dragon Queen. "I just want to be sure we are safe to talk." She paused for a second. "It is safe; you can speak now."

Treguard took a breath and spoke: "Just tell me why we gave out our plans to Romahna."

"What did I tell you about putting on a good performance?" the Dragon Queen smiled. "That was not Romahna, but it was a very good copy of her. It nearly fooled me; this new techno-magic is very hard to spot. However, I got a telepathic message from Smirkenorff, saying that Romahna had gone missing several days ago, before we first moved Smirkenorff, so he was under orders to go to the mating nest no mater what. I don't plan to move Smirkenorff to the mountains that I showed you, but to this volcano here. It's where he was born, and only he and I know exactly where it is. We will move some dragons to the mountains, yes, but not Smirkenorff. I will use two other dragons as bait. The two I have in mind are almost identical to Smirkenorff and his mate. They are the dragons' twins."

Treguard's mouth dropped open.

"When Smirkenorff was born," the Dragon Queen continued, "he had a twin, which was sent to Grimaldine's land in order to keep it safe, as insurance that Smirkenorff's line would continue. His mate also has a twin. Now we must go to the mountains to make sure that our fake plan is to go well. Come, we have much to prepare."

Meanwhile, inside Marblehead, Lord Fear was pacing the room, waiting for the door to open. When it did, in came Romahna.

"Did our plan work?" asked Lord Fear.

"Yes, my lord," said Romahna, as she transformed into Maldame. "Our plan worked perfectly. I now know where the dragon is and to where it is to be moved. The Dragon Queen was fooled; our magic worked to perfection. Here, this is were they are being moved to."

Maldame showed Lord Fear all that she had been told. Lord Fear smiled.

"Good," he approved. "You have done well. I don't even mind that you told them where we're going to attack from - it is a small price to pay. Those fools! Well, let's make sure that the mountains become their graveyard! It should be my red dragon mating, not Smirkenorff! Come, my dear, let

us go and administer our revenge!"

So, will Lord Fear and Maldame succeed in carrying out their evil revenge, or will the Dragon Queen be able to stop them in time? Read the conclusion of Catherine's story next time to find out.

PUZZLE PAGE ONE

Famous Firsts

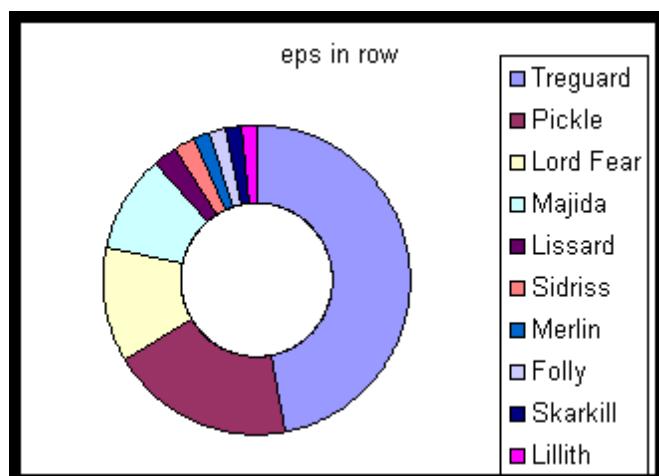
Match the monumental *Nightmare* firsts on the left with the correct character, dungeoneer, episode or object on the right. For example, the **first character to appear on *Nightmare*** would match up with **Treguard**. Simple!

Famous First	Candidates
Character met in the Dungeon.	Cedric.
Dungeoneer.	Lillith.
Clue object used.	Episode 108.
Episode to feature level two.	David.
Character to kill a dungeoneer.	Claire.
Winning dungeoneer.	Julie II.
Clue object wrongly left behind.	Treguard.
Episode to feature level three.	Olgarth.
Character to wield a weapon.	Velda.
Female dungeoneer.	Episode 103.
Dungeoneer with an all-girl team.	Simon I.
Person to say "Spellcasting."	Julian.
Female winning dungeoneer.	Ruby.
Mixed team winning dungeoneer.	Richard I.
Character to say "Dunshelm."	Maeve.
Dungeoneer to reach level two.	Mark.
Dungeoneer to reach level three.	Magic lamp.

KNIGHTMARE TOP TEN

This is a list of the top ten characters with the most consecutive episodes. I have limited each character to one appearance only in the list, taking into account each individual character's personal best of consecutive episodes.

Position	Character	Consecutive episodes
1.	Treguard	112 (101-810)
2.	Pickle	47 (401-615)
3.	Lord Fear	28 (510-706)
4.	Majida	25 (701-810)
5.	Lissard	6 (701-706)
6.	Sidriss	5 (605-609)
=7.	Merlin	4 (203-206)
=7.	Folly	4 (104-107)
=7.	Skarkill	4 (612-615)
=7.	Lillith	4 (101-104)



CLASSIC QUEST

Series 5

Quest: The Crown.

Dungeoneer: Jenna Barber.

Advisors: Andrea, Kelly and Anna.

Home town: Exeter, Devon.

Team score: 2 out of 10.

A completely useless team, this time, whose level one death reflected their utter hopelessness. Sorry to be so cruelly blunt, but the evidence follows...

Level One: In the Wolfglade, a choice of objects awaits Jenna. One of these is a small chest and, despite a very clear warning on the scroll - *Don't open the box!* - one of the advisors brightly suggests that Jenna *sees if the chest opens at all*. Fortunately, Treguard and Pickle point out this mistake, and the advisors decide to take the box without opening it. Jenna also acquires a bag of gold. A boat ride with Brother Mace follows, during which the monk gives Jenna some information about her quest - she must buy aniseed in order to pay Smirkenorff for a flight to level two. Jenna next reaches Wolfenden, where Julius Scaramonger engages her in conversation. The team manage to negotiate the sale of a jar of aniseed in exchange for the gold, then Scaramonger gives Jenna a free spyglass, through which Lord Fear can be seen tasking Sylvester Hands with apprehending Jenna, using a truly masterful plan: "*I nab her and sit on her 'til the frightknights come.*" - **Sylvester Hands**. Jenna finds herself back in the woods next, where she has to shout at two assassins in order to scare them away. Gwendoline turns up and reprimands Jenna for causing noise pollution, before shooting the two assassins with her bow and arrows. Back in the Dungeon, Jenna meets Sylvester Hands. He is very interested in the small chest she is carrying, so he takes it from her. When Hands opens the chest, Pixel flies out and attacks him until he runs off. Once Jenna has placated Pixel's wrath, the pixie agrees to continue to travel with her. After retrieving the box, Jenna reaches the Aggression and Defence causeway. After walking on a shield, Jenna is then directed onto a sword, and promptly plummets to her doom.

Summary: A hopeless quest that never showed any promise, which was brought to its timely demise by a typically careless mistake.

The Tower of Time

By Rosey Collins

Welcome to the bumper final chapter of Rosey's story. What end result will Curran and Laurel's quest into the Knightmare Dungeon produce? You're about to find out.

"So, this is level two," Laurel remarked dryly, gazing at her surroundings. "Another bloody forest."

"Come on." Curran grabbed her wrist and practically dragged her through the mass of trees in front of them.

"Curran, please listen to me," Laurel begged. "I know I was the one who brought you here, but I just don't trust this quest anymore. The way we got past the monk was just too easy. There's more to this than meets the eye - I know it!"

"You told me the Tower of Time could bring my father back," snapped Curran. "Can't it?"

"Perhaps. I don't know."

"That monk said I could get what I wanted there." Curran continued to walk, heading in the direction of what looked like a hollow tree, with a large spider's web hanging from one of its branches. "You don't have to come with me."

"Wait!" cried Laurel, hurrying after him. "That spell he gave you - TWIST - it sounds nasty. You should abandon it."

"It'll help me."

"But Curran... TWIST. Nothing good ever came of anything twisted."

Curran looked at her for a moment, and then said evenly, "I'm going into this tree."

He went, and Laurel, sighing deeply, followed. She found herself transported into a reasonably large chamber. In the centre of it was a tree stump, on which sat two fresh looking apples. Sighing with relief, Curran hurried over to the apples and picked one up in each hand, giving one to Laurel as she approached.

"Don't trust this either?" he asked, biting into his own apple as Laurel turned hers over suspiciously in her hand.

"There are no other objects here, Curran," she pointed out. "Why might that be?"

"Won't need them, I guess," shrugged Curran, garbling through a mouthful of apple, and spraying pieces of it everywhere as he talked.

"Exactly. It's all becoming too easy."

Curran didn't reply. Laurel sighed deeply, wondering how to persuade him, subconsciously taking a look at her surroundings. Her stomach was growling, so she lifted the apple to her mouth. She froze, her mouth open and the hand that held the apple hovering in front of it; a giant spider's web was stretched out above their heads.

"Curran," she whispered.

"What?" Curran returned irritably.

"I think we should get out of here."

He followed her gaze up to the spider's web, stared at it for a moment and finally nodded his agreement. He could well imagine the spider that had spun that thing.

"All right," he returned quietly. "Come on."

"That spider's web," Laurel persisted, as they strolled leisurely through a quaint little stone chamber with a trickling waterfall in one corner. "Something must have spun it, and I'd be willing to bet that whatever it was is normally on guard down here. But we were just allowed to pass through. Why do you think that was? Blimey - this looks steep!"

"Don't be such a wimp," scolded Curran, as he jumped agilely down the precarious crumbling steps that led the way back into the forest. "It'll be fine, Laurel. Stop worrying."

Stop worrying? Laurel bit her lip, deciding to stay quiet for the moment. What worried her most was that Curran seemed to have lost all of the qualms and the fears he had set out with. When they'd started this quest, she had been the one in control - the one with all the confidence. But now he was just pressing on without even considering what danger might lie ahead.

"We're close," he whispered. "I can feel it."

"We haven't met a single obstacle on this level," Laurel pointed out. "The Dungeon's not supposed to work like that. If you're on the side of truth and justice, nothing is free."

Curran sighed. "I just want my father back. Oh, look - a little man with pointy ears. Maybe he'll present some kind of problem."

"It's an elf," muttered Laurel, following Curran's gaze to the small man dressed in green, who was sitting in the centre of the chamber. The room was large, bare and made of blue stone, and ended abruptly in what looked like a deep chasm. A drawbridge on the far wall presented the only means of exit, if only they could discover some way of opening it.

The elf saw them, and jumped nimbly to his feet. "I don't see many humans around here," he remarked, approaching them guardedly, his knees bent as though in preparation to run if he had to. "You've done well to make it this far through the Dungeon. Those are dangerous woods

from which you have just emerged. I was about to enter them myself, before I realised I was too weak. You need wits in that place, and speed, and no human could survive it without help, or magic of some kind."

"You do look a bit peaky," Laurel remarked, evidently still thinking of the elf's comment about being weak. "Would you like this?"

The elf looked down at Laurel's proffered hand, and his eyes widened at the sight of the juicy apple. Eagerly he said, "I would, young lady - if you're quite sure you don't need it yourself."

"I'll be fine," Laurel assured him. "I, er, had a big breakfast."

"I'm afraid I have nothing to give you in return," the elf lamented. But then, quite suddenly, his freckled face broke into a smile. "Ah, but of course - you'll want to exit this chamber."

"We need to get to the Tower of Time," Curran said quickly.

"It lies on the other side of that drawbridge," the elf told him. "It has been locked with lies, but you can open it with the truth. However, before you can attempt it, it is necessary to perform a little summoning spell. I'll do it for you, shall I?"

Curran looked on suspiciously as the elf turned to face the drawbridge, proclaiming grandly, "True and false, false and true; open up and let us through!"

Laurel was faintly, though not very, surprised when an unhappy face appeared on the drawbridge and began to cry great tears, which rolled into the chasm below it. It unnerved Laurel slightly when she realised that she didn't hear a single one of those tears hit the bottom of the pit.

"Young human," murmured the elf, as Curran approached the drawbridge, staring up at it with deep suspicion. "I sense that your friend will soon choose the wrong path, if he hasn't already done so. You met no threats in the wood? No sword maidens, or giant spiders?"

"That's right," Laurel confirmed.

"Then you are already in danger; why, you are probably receiving help from Mogdred himself, to have come so far without incident."

"Is it too late?"

"Certainly not for you," the elf replied gravely. "Once I've eaten this apple and rested a little, I'm going back through the forest. I want to try and find my way out of this accursed place - I hope I might make a better living in Knightmare Castle."

Laurel looked surprised. "An elf working in a castle?"

"You can't imagine the dangers down here, human. My people have all left this place - there's nothing here for me. Now I want to help young adventurers, like you. And not just when they happen to meet me. I want to be where I can watch over them, and give them guidance."

"That Treguard won't like you helping them out," warned Laurel.

"Something tells me your friend could have done with a guide like me," retorted the elf. "Listen, human - you can come with me. I know Dunkley Wood well enough - I can protect us both."

"I'm tempted," Laurel confessed. "But I must try to help Curran."

The elf winced. "Why must humans hand out their names so freely? Well, my dear, if you must go with him, please be careful."

"Of course I will. Hey..."

The elf had been about to scamper away, but when Laurel called to him he stopped, and looked at her expectantly.

"What are Curran and that door talking about?"

"The door's name is Doorkis," the elf told her. "He's asking your friend some simple true or false questions. Pray he gets them wrong. If he does, your quest will have to end here."

No sooner had he spoken than the drawbridge started crashing forwards with a metallic grating sound.

"Laurel!" called Curran, as he began to walk over the bridge before him. "Are you coming?"

"Thank you," Laurel said to the elf, as she made to follow.

"I wish I could have done more," the elf replied enigmatically.

It was a beautiful place. They stared across a vast body of calm water, surrounded by trees, at an imposing fortress with a tall tower that dominated the landscape.

"That must be the Tower of Time," Curran decided, pointing at the great tower. "The elf said it was on the other side of that drawbridge. I suppose I have to get up there, then."

"I'd worry about getting up there," retorted Laurel, "after you've found a way to get across *that*."

She pointed at the vast lake that surrounded the castle, and Curran frowned at it, thinking. There was no visible means to get across. He glanced vaguely from left to right, hoping that he might put together some kind of raft, but he quickly grew impatient.

"Curran!" wailed Laurel, as her friend marched towards the water and waded a few feet into it. "You'll drown!"

"It's just a bit of water!" Curran called back. "Christ, but it's cold! Whoa!" he spluttered, as the ground beneath him suddenly disappeared and he fell beneath the surface.

"CURRAN!" screamed Laurel. She stood there a moment, her heart pounding, but she breathed out when Curran's head finally surfaced.

"AND DEEP!" he shouted out to her. "LAUREL - STAY THERE! I'D

NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF IF YOU DROWNED IN THIS STUFF!"

"WHAT ABOUT YOU?" Laurel wailed desperately, but he had already swum out of earshot.

The further Curran swam, the further away from him the great fortress seemed to be. Very soon he felt his muscles weakening. He lost control of his limbs, and everything seemed to go black as he desperately tried to breathe. Instead of air, he found himself inhaling icy water.

Curran was barely conscious when he felt a cold, skeletal hand on his wrist. He was dragged out of the water, and found himself lying on a wooden floor. He was still aware of the feeling of movement, as though the water was still beneath him.

"Foolish boy," a hollow voice scolded him. "How do you expect to retrieve your father like that?"

"There was no other way to cross," gasped Curran.

"Hmm, yes... I conjured this boat to save you - I may leave it here," the voice mused. "I am required to give young adventurers a chance, after all - and the Dunswater could be fatal to anyone who attempts that swim. They shan't cross for free, of course."

"Ferrymen always charge a fare anyway," remarked Curran. "Silver or gold, I guess - that seems to be the currency around here."

"Shut up!" snarled the voice. "You haven't the strength. You'll freeze to death if you are not careful. Oh - here!"

Curran was vaguely aware of being wrapped in a great cloak and a large hood, which fell down over his eyes. He was grateful to feel a little warmer. He pulled himself up onto the wooden seat behind him and rested there, still thinking of ferrymen and silver and gold, until his rescuer rowed them to a little jetty.

"Wait there," he ordered. "Get your strength. Now, listen to me. Your friend gave her apple to an elf in exchange for his help, but other than that you have been allowed through this level for free. This is because I wished you to reach the Tower of Time. Do you understand?"

Curran looked up, and saw that the man opposite him had a sinister white face and a malevolent glow in his eyes.

"Do you understand?" the man repeated.

"You wished it?" asked Curran, confused. "Who are you?"

"I am a very powerful sorcerer," the sinister man told him. "The Tower of Time holds secrets which even I do not understand. I wish to see how my magic works in that place, for I believe it has the power to freeze time, change it, or even bring back the dead. When you are in the Tower, you must use my magic. Do you still have the spell TWIST?"

"Yes," Curran replied meekly. Was this man, then, the monk he had met at the wellway?

"If you attempt to go to level three and conquer the Dungeon, your quest will meet a very sticky end," the sorcerer portended. "Now, you have rested enough - you have the strength to proceed."

"But I don't understand," Curran objected. "You brought me here to test your magic. Why can't you do that yourself?"

The man smiled sinisterly. Curran guessed that this ominous sorcerer was a little afraid of the fortress's temporal powers, but, of course, that was not the answer the man gave.

"Can't you see that I am helping you?" asked the sorcerer. "The Tower cannot help you without magic."

"So, if I use your spell, will my father return to me?"

"Perhaps."

Curran began to wish he had listened to Laurel. He didn't like this at all. However, he realised that if he argued with this man, it would undoubtedly mean his death.

"All right," he said. "I'll go. But if this doesn't work the way you seem to expect, can your magic protect me?"

"I make no promises."

"Laurel!"

Laurel had been wondering whether she could paddle across the lake on a large fallen branch she had just spotted, and was astonished to hear her name shouted so urgently. She practically jumped out of her skin, and then turned to see an elderly bearded man in green robes hurrying towards her.

"Merlin?" she asked incredulously.

"Young lady, thank goodness I've found you!" exclaimed Merlin, skidding to a breathless halt. "News of your quest failed to reach me when you came to the end of level one! I sensed that Mogdred must be interfering with your progress, and then I met an elf whilst trying to locate you in Dunkley Wood. I think he said his name was Tickle."

"Er, it might have been," said Laurel. "We met an elf, and he seemed very worried about what Curran was blundering into."

"Where is Curran now?" Merlin asked urgently.

"He's been swimming through that lake."

"Oh, the foolish boy! No human could possibly survive the Dunswater! Oh, Laurel - Mogdred is near this place. I can sense it."

"Who is this Mogdred?" asked Laurel.

"He is the dark side of my nature, and of my magic," Merlin replied

gravely. "That fortress is of great interest to him, I'm afraid. In it lies the entrance to level three, and also a very dangerous magic that neither of us understands. If Mogdred can learn how to use the magic of the Tower of Time, he'll be able to stop anyone from reaching level three."

"That lake's obstacle enough," Laurel remarked dryly. "And anyway, that's not fair - isn't he supposed to give adventurers a chance?"

"Yes," said Merlin, "and perhaps he will. But he must learn the secrets of that place before he can learn *how* to give adventurers a chance against it. Tickle told me he fears that Curran has accepted help from Mogdred, and is therefore in his debt. He may be in great danger, Laurel - but perhaps I can bend the rules just this once to save him..."

"Hurry!" exclaimed Laurel, when she saw that Merlin seemed to be struggling to remember something.

"Laurel, please - don't rush me! My memory isn't what it once was, you know. Ah yes, I remember. Spellcasting: W-I-N-D!"

Laurel barely had time to think that this didn't seem exactly a complicated spell to remember before she felt herself whipped into the air by a powerful whirlwind. She panicked slightly, but was reassured to feel Merlin's hand on her arm, his voice calling through the noise of the wind, "Don't worry!"

They soon landed just outside the entrance to the castle.

"Oh Merlin, I'm sorry," sighed Laurel, once she was over her dizziness. "Curran never would have known this place existed if it hadn't been for me, and he *certainly* wouldn't have come here."

"What you wanted to do was always a danger," Merlin told her gravely. "Surely you know that it is foolish to play around with such things, Laurel. Life and death are not to be meddled with. But you know that now, don't you?"

Shamefaced, Laurel nodded slowly.

"We all make mistakes, my dear," Merlin said kindly. "Now we must try not to make any whilst we rescue your impetuous young friend."

Unsurprisingly, Curran was faced with a long and strenuous climb to the topmost tower. Once at the top of the spiral staircase, he just stood for a moment, trying to catch his breath. He had noticed that the place was poorly guarded. Did the secret, whatever it was, want to be discovered? Perhaps it was simply impossible to discover it, or else so deadly that the magic itself was guardian enough.

Steeling himself, Curran reached for the great oak door in front of him, terrified to find out the truth. He was perspiring heavily, in spite of having shed the heavy garments given to him by the sorcerer in the boat.

The grey stone room was bare, save for a giant hourglass in its centre, taller than Curran himself. He approached it cautiously, staring at the golden sands within as they descended endlessly to the bottom half of the glass, magically disappearing and reappearing in the top half to fall once again. Curran stared at it. Whatever the secret, this glass must be the key. He dared not touch it, and so decided to try speaking to it.

"Show me my father," he requested.

"Good," the sorcerer's voice suddenly came to his ears. "Touch the glass."

Curran, though terrified, knew he had no choice but to obey. He took a step closer to the hourglass and placed a palm on its smooth, shiny surface. It was warm to the touch, and evoked a slight tingling sensation in his hand.

He asked it again, "Show me my father - please!"

This time, something happened. The golden sands in the lower half of the glass gave way to reveal Curran's own reflection, while the sands in the top half began to spiral as though a wind had been created inside. Within seconds, they had come together to form an image. Curran stared up at it, aghast, as he realised that he was seeing his own father outside Knightmare Castle, when it was being attacked and taken from the Dunshelm family. He was unarmed, a Saxon guard bearing down upon him with a heavy broadsword.

"NO!" exclaimed Curran. Then, instinctively, he did the only thing he could think of: "Spellcasting: T-W-I-S-T!"

As the last letter escaped his lips, the door burst open behind him and Laurel tumbled into the room. "NO!" she screamed, as Curran finished the spell. He turned to look at her, desperation in his eyes, but it was too late.

The image of the battle, in the top half of the glass, separated back out into tiny grains of sand. These fell through to the bottom of the glass, where the image reformed just as the Saxon guard brought his broadsword down upon his victim. However, this was no longer Curran's father. It was Curran himself. Laurel realised it at once, and ran to the hourglass. She pressed her hands against it, beating furiously as though hoping to break the glass and free her friend.

In the top half of the glass stood Curran's father, his face the picture of terror as he suddenly seemed to fall through the glass and onto the floor beside Laurel. She didn't seem interested in him, however. She watched Curran dying before her very eyes, the Saxon beating him brutally with his heavy weapon. Tears welled in her eyes. He

couldn't be dead!

"He's dead," Merlin's voice said gently.

Laurel turned to look at him. "What?"

"Curran's father. He was whisked out of the past, on the point of death - the shock must have killed him."

Laurel shook her head despairingly, wiping the tears from her eyes. "What about Curran?" she demanded, crouching down by the dead man's body. She reached into her pocket and pulled out two coins, which she placed carefully on the corpse's eyes. "Is he dead too?"

"It seems he died some years ago, attacking Knightmare Castle. I am so sorry, Laurel. I should have found you sooner."

Laurel stared at the corpse a few moments more, and then rose to her full height, examining the hourglass thoughtfully. Merlin, meanwhile, was distracted with thoughts of Mogdred. Sensing something, he went over to the nearby window. Looking down, he saw Mogdred standing on the jetty below beside a wooden rowboat, though he paid no attention to this.

"Mogdred, you despicable creature!" the wizard roared angrily. "He's dead!"

"He was foolish!" retorted Mogdred. "As are you, old man! Just see what you do next!"

With that the evil sorcerer broke into a cackle of laughter, and began to disappear. Merlin scowled down at the spot where he had stood, wondering what Mogdred had meant by his last remark. How could he know what Merlin would do next?

"Show me Curran!"

Alarmed, Merlin turned when he heard this command from Laurel. She was staring into the hourglass, watching an image of Curran coughing and spluttering on the floor of a wooden rowboat while none other than Mogdred wrapped him roughly in warm garments. A large brown hood obscured Curran's face, and his body was engulfed in a baggy cloak.

"Funny," remarked Merlin. "This glass only seems to show people on the brink of death."

"Can't you save him?" begged Laurel. "Wouldn't Curran's father have survived, if not for the shock?"

"Laurel, I can't," Merlin protested. "I can't fool around with life and death."

"He was so young!" exclaimed Laurel. "And he was a bloody idiot, but he didn't deserve that. Please - can't you get him out of there? There must be something you can do!"

Merlin shook his head. "My dear, I told you - I do not know the

secrets of this place."

"Can't you try?"

The tears were flowing freely, and she gazed up at Merlin with lovelorn eyes. Merlin immediately forgot Mogdred's ominous parting remark, seeing only a young woman who had lost a loved one to an untimely death.

"I don't know how to use my magic together with the magic of this place," he told her gently. "But with Curran dead, I suppose I have nothing to lose. I shall try."

"Thank you," sniffed Laurel.

Merlin produced a slender wand from the sleeve of his robe, and pointed it at the hourglass. "Spellcasting!" he proclaimed. "F-R-E-E-Z-E!"

The image immediately disappeared.

"Strange," remarked Merlin. "I had hoped to freeze the moment before attempting to bring Curran back. Safer that way," he added, by way of explanation.

"Where is he?" Laurel asked anxiously.

Before Merlin could even begin to think of a reply, Mogdred's sinister laughter filled the room. His image appeared in the hourglass, smiling mockingly at his alter ego.

"Do not worry, young lady - the old fool has saved your friend's life," he said tauntingly. "But what a life it is now. Go down to that jetty beneath the window. He's waiting for you."

Merlin peered into the glass, and saw that Mogdred was himself standing on that jetty. The evil sorcerer then did a curious thing. He turned away from Merlin and looked up, crowing gleefully, "He was foolish! As are you, old man! Just see what you do next!"

"Oh dear," lamented Merlin, as light suddenly dawned. "Oh dear, dear, dear."

"What?" Laurel cried desperately. "What's wrong?"

"Perhaps we had better go down to that jetty and see."

Laurel scurried hastily down the stairs. When she was outside the castle, she found Merlin already there waiting for her, staring in horror at a rowboat by the jetty. As she approached, she saw a hooded figure sitting in the boat, oars at the ready.

"Deep is the Dunswater, and cold," the hooded man proclaimed. "The fare for the crossing is silver or gold."

"Er, thank you, no," said Merlin, a little awkwardly. "Not today."

The man grunted, and then began rowing away towards the forest, where he would wait until someone arrived; someone who was in need of passage across the water.

"Merlin!" exclaimed Laurel. "I recognised that voice! It was Curran! He isn't dead!"

"No," Merlin agreed, his voice strangely sad. "But I'm afraid he can't leave that boat, Laurel. While I did manage to save his life, I also left him stranded in a single moment of time - the moment he crossed the water in Mogdred's boat, about ready to freeze to death."

"So where's Mogdred?" demanded Laurel.

"He had the power to escape," Merlin explained. "Curran, as you know, did not. Mogdred left him with the boat, the oars, that rather sinister looking getup and whatever thought was with him when I cast my spell. Oh dear - I knew I shouldn't have tried anything rash."

"It's okay," said Laurel, fighting back tears. "He's alive. There must be a way to free him."

"Oh, Laurel, I don't know about that."

"There *must* be! Anything is possible with magic!"

Merlin cocked an eyebrow. "Is that what you believe? Well, my dear, there may be a way to free him. I shall look into it. But first, I have to send you home."

He raised his wand, but Laurel held up a hand to stop him.

"How can I go home after this?" she asked, her voice quiet and shaking. "If there's a way to free him, I have to try and find it."

"Another quest?" Merlin looked dubious. "Well, I suppose you *were* fairly sensible throughout this one. Very well then, Laurel. I shall accompany you to Witch Haven, where I shall tell Queen Greystagg that you wish to learn magic, and find a way to free your friend. But then I must leave you, and return here. Do you agree?"

"Yes," Laurel replied shakily. "If that's what I have to do to save Curran, then yes. Please," she added hastily.

Merlin nodded, and raised his wand. In a moment, they had both vanished and the jetty lay empty. Some distance away, a lonely figure rowed to shore. When his boat was aground, he put down his oars and sat there, silent, motionless, waiting.

THE END

And there you have it; the origin of the ferryman. But does Laurel ever find a way to release Curran? Only Rosey knows, for now...

CREATURE FEATURE

Series 3/4/5/6. Level 1/2/3.

ELVES

Elves are one of the most famous faerie creatures in folklore. Mostly secretive, sometimes mischievous and very occasionally evil, these small woodland-dwelling magical creatures are to be found in many myths and legends. There were three elfin characters in Knightmare, all of them slightly different. A very different version of the elfin race can be found, however, in the second Knightmare book, *The Labyrinths of Fear*.

King Arawn and his court of elfin knights are presented as ruthless, unholy and evil, and are clearly a lot larger and taller than traditional elves. Dave Morris has used the term *elf* in a wide sense here, describing faerie creatures which do not necessarily fit the same criteria as Velda, Pickle and Elita. Since elves are creatures of folklore, this interpretation of them is, of course, just as valid as any other.

Velda (Natasha Pope) was the first elf we saw on Knightmare, in the first episode of series 3. She was a nervous, suspicious wood elf who hated goblins, and carried a crossbow and several daggers. She would have used these against dungeoneers if they had given her reason to do so, although they never did. Velda required patience and courtesy if she was to be dealt with effectively.

Like Velda, Pickle (David Learner) was a wood elf. He, of course, was Treguard's assistant during series 4, 5 and 6, providing a friendly face to encourage the team in times of trouble, and to help Treguard explain various things about the Dungeon and, in particular, the Greenwood. I think Pickle did a fantastic job of this, and I think it's a shame he was replaced, particularly when you consider his successor.

Elita (Stephanie Hesp) was a very rude cavern elf, who totally disproved Treguard's theory of series 3 that elves were keen on courtesy. Her small stature fitted the role well, although I found her quite annoying.

Killer Instinct: 2 Velda would certainly have killed if given reason to do so.

Gore Factor: 3 Some very foul language, certainly.

Humanity: 7 Mostly like us... mostly.

Fear Factor: 6 Armed with a spear of ice, a crossbow or a sharp tongue, these elves were no pushovers.

REMEMBER HIM?

Series 1/2. Level 2.

CASPER THE KEY

Despite his infrequent and unvaried appearances on Knightmare, Casper (the talking key) seems to be remembered very fondly by many fans, including myself. This is quite strange, really, when you think that all there was to Casper was a clue object prop and the voice of Lawrence Weber, sounding much higher than that of Cedric. Casper was a very endearing character, who always wanted to help and support the dungeoneers he encountered all he could. His high tones of encouragement - and sometimes criticism - really epitomise level two in series 1, and I think this is why Casper has a longer shelf-life than one might expect.

Casper was simply an old iron key that belonged to Merlin, but he had been magically given a voice so that Merlin could keep track of where he was: *"Merlin made me like this because he kept losing me."* - *Casper*. Inevitably in the first series, any dungeoneer arriving in the level two clue room could expect to meet Casper, pick him up, use him to unlock a door (typically in the Moving Keyhole challenge) and then deliver him safely back to Merlin. This was accomplished by the three dungeoneers who reached level two in series 1, Simon, Danny and Richard. They all found that, as well as picking up a key, they had picked up a friend who would try to help them out in times of trouble.

Once Casper had been returned to Merlin, he would often continue trying to help the team by giving them clues for riddle answers: *"Hey, Richard, think of something that's used in a game!"* - *Casper*. He would always wish the dungeoneer luck before they left Merlin's room as well, nicely rounding off his brief period of help and support for the quest. Merlin, of course, found Casper's chattering somewhat annoying after a while: *"I'm beginning to regret that particular experiment; it was a lot more peaceful just losing things."* - *Merlin*.

Casper was as good an escort for the quest as any other character to follow (even though he couldn't protect the dungeoneers from goblins or fight off pookas) because of his cheerful, friendly, helpful disposition. Having an unconditional ally of any kind - even a talking key - is quite a rare occurrence in the dark depths of the Dungeon, and should be

cherished accordingly.

In series 2, Casper completely disappeared until the final two episodes, which was clearly an oversight by the production team. During his brief appearance with Steven, he landed the dungeoneer in hot water with a very drunken Gumboil, which was a bit less helpful than his previous efforts. In addition to this, Casper did not unlock one single door in series 2! He should therefore be remembered, I feel, for his glory days in series 1, being the best friend a dungeoneer could ever have!

Fear Factor: 2 He occasionally lapsed into Cedric-like insults.

Killer Instinct: 0 No way he could even have tried, really.

Humour Rating: 8 Usually game for a laugh.

Oscar Standard: 9 As good a performance as a talking key as ever there was.

KNIGHTMARE LOCATIONS

Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Chichester, West Sussex

The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum. Vital Statistics:

Location: Chichester, West Sussex.

Century of Origin: Various.

Also Known As: Wolfenden.

Series featured in: 5 and 6.

These pictures were taken by me, Jake Collins, in July 2004.



Being at the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum really is an incredible experience; it feels just like being a dungeoneer in Wolfenden. Before visiting the museum, I had been hoping to be able to capture a panoramic view of Wolfenden village on film. As you can see from the photo above, I was certainly not disappointed in this ambition.

Below is a view down Wolfenden High Street, just as many dungeoneers first saw it upon entering the village.



Finally this issue, here is one of Wolfenden's most famous farmhouses.



Next Issue: More from the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum.

PUZZLE PAGE TWO

Famous Lasts

Well, you must have been expecting this! Match the monumental Knightmare lasts on the left with the correct character, dungeoneer, episode or object on the right.

Famous Last	Candidates
Character to be seen.	Bhal-Shebah.
Dungeoneer.	Rebecca.
Character to talk in a spyglass sequence.	Sidriss.
Episode to feature level two.	Oliver.
Character to kill a dungeoneer.	Julian.
Winning dungeoneer.	Episode 810.
Character to speak.	Smirkenorff.
Episode to feature Pickle.	Treguard.
Character to accept a bar of gold.	Julie II.
Female dungeoneer.	Nathan.
Dungeoneer with a mixed team.	Episode 808.
Person to award a spell that we see cast.	Episode 615.
Female winning dungeoneer.	Dunstan.
Mixed team winning dungeoneer.	Richard III.
Character to say "Knightmare."	Honesty Bartram.
Dungeoneer to die in level three.	Lord Fear.
Episode to feature Hordriss.	Lissard.

THE LORD OF DREAMS

Part III

Mona, Charley and Lily have begun their quest in the Nightmare Dungeon, and have earned a spell called SHIMMER from Bumptious.

They came into what looked like a kitchen, with a table and four chairs, a dresser and a stove unit as well as two portals on the far wall.

"Wow, an authentic medieval kitchen" said Mona in awe.

"Feels kind of creepy to me" shivered Lily. "Can we go now?"

"Probably wouldn't be a very good idea" Mona reasoned. "Remember that the Dungeon is setting us a challenge here, and it's very unlikely we'd end up somewhere we didn't specifically need to be."

As she spoke, an elderly woman ran in through the left-hand door.

"You see?"

Lily nodded, beginning to understand a little more about this adventure.

"Hello, dearies" smiled the woman. "Come to dinner, have you? Well, sit down, please."

"Are you a witch?" asked Lily dubiously as they sat down.

"Yes, I am dearie!" she exclaimed with glee. "What a clever girl you are! My name's Mrs. Grimwold and this is my kitchen. I've come to make supper for my husband."

"Your husband?" asked Mona suspiciously.

"Grimwold is an ogre" Mrs. Grimwold told them. "He's a fussy eater, you know. Mind you, my two-headed dog Festus is even worse; he just has to have live prey!"

"I don't think we will stay, if you don't mind," said Mona apologetically. "You see, we're on this..."

"Nonsense, dearie" said Mrs. Grimwold. "I insist you stay to dinner with Grimwold and me. Oh, look, here he is now."

A huge salivating ogre with a club shambled into the room. He roared with hunger when he saw the gathering at the table.

"Hello, Grimmy" the witch greeted him, leading him to the table. "Look, I've got your dinner all ready for you. Give me a shout when you're finished and we'll get some pudding, okay?"

Mrs. Grimwold cackled as she left the room, leaving Mr. Grimwold to lick his lips at the three morsels at his table.

"Eek!" screamed Lily. "He's going to eat us!"

"Time to leave, I think," Mona hissed, leading her friends swiftly over to the right-hand door, ignoring Mr. Grimwold's roars of protest.

Mona discovered a scroll on the floor in front of the door, on which was written the word EXHUME. Another dwarf tunnel followed.

"What's written on that scroll?" asked Charley.

"Just the word EXHUME," said Mona.

"Another spell perhaps?" Charley suggested.

"I know!" Lily piped up. "I bet it's some kind of password."

"Could well be" Mona agreed. "Look, there's a portal up ahead."

They found themselves in a grey-black stone room with one door, and wall with pronounced lines in its lighter grey bricks.

"I bet that wall's going to move" Lily shuddered. "Just look at it!"

Sure enough, the wall grated forward to block their path. It had a menacing face hewn into it.

"Password!" it demanded.

"It's some kind of spiritual manifestation" Mona whispered. "And it wants the password."

"Well we've got it" Lily declared. "Exhume!"

The wall lingered for a moment and then crumbled to dust, leaving their exit clear.

"Well done" said Mona. "You were right about that word. Come on, let's go."

The next chamber consisted purely of doorless brick walls.

"How do we get out of here?" wondered Charley.

"Hello dearies. Took my Grimmy's supper away from him, did you? That's not nice, you know."

They watched Mrs. Grimwold step out from the shadows, followed by a salivating two-headed dog with five tails and sharp teeth. Fang hissed and arched his back.

"You stopped the blocker from having his fun too, didn't you?" Mrs. Grimwold leered. "Well, at least Festus won't go hungry. He's pleased to see you, dearies. Go on Festus; FETCH!"

They backed up against the wall.

"The spell!" hissed Charley.

"I know!" hissed back Mona. "Spellcasting: S-H-I-M-M-E-R."

The wall behind them began to fade into a shimmering haze, and they stepped backwards through it, into another chamber.

"Go on, Festus, chase them!" Mrs. Grimwold ordered the hound.

"Quick, get rid of it!" screamed Lily.

"Dispel:" Mona proclaimed. "M-E-R-H-S-I-M."

The wall took on a solid shape again, trapping Festus and Mrs. Grimwold on the other side. The room in which they found themselves was identical to the previous one, except for a well in the far left-hand corner.

"Looks like that's the only way out," said Lily.

"Yes" said Mona. "And the way down to the second level, by my reckoning. Wells were often used to change levels in castles and dungeons if the staircases were besieged by enemies."

"Good!" beamed Charley. "Then let's get to level two."

He and Lily leapt down, and Mona followed with Fang in her arms.

They got the fright of their lives in the next room. There were four doors, but they were blocked by a colossal creature. It was made up of bones, warped in size, and contained a skull upon a pelvic saddle sprouting four sinuous limbs. The screeching noise it made was deafeningly horrible. Mona stared up at the catacombite's face; the eye sockets glowed eerily red, and it was dominated by the terrifying grin of the long dead.

"Oh my God, it's horrible!" screamed Lily. "Do something, Mona."

"What is it?" asked Charley.

"I don't know, Zapman" Mona admitted. "It's some kind of skeleton reanimated after death. It must feed on creatures' living essence; even a brush against it could probably kill us."

"What do we do?" Lily screeched over the din it was making.

"The brain!" Mona exclaimed, staring at its glowing eyes. "To destroy a creature like this, you must destroy the brain. Zapman, hit it with your stun gun."

Charley obeyed and the creature screamed louder, but it did not stop writhing about.

"It's not working!" he cried.

"Wait a second" Mona said. "There's more to come."

As Lily and Fang watched in terror, Mona approached the creature two steps, and stood in front of its glowing eyes. She held up both hands, one in front of each socket.

"Keep that stun ray on it!"

She closed her eyes and splayed her hands. Lightning streamed from her fingertips and into the eye sockets. The catacombite bellowed in pain as its brain was destroyed and it exploded into a thousand pieces.

"Quick, out, before we're buried!" Mona called urgently. With Fang, Charley and Lily following, she dashed out of the nearest door.

The next room was large and pink with a high arched door. There was a table in one corner, and a figure clad in red and yellow appeared to be sleeping on it.

"What a horrible creature that was" Lily squirmed. "It was frightening because it was so huge, and unnerving because it was made of human bones."

"I agree," said Charley. "I hope there aren't too many things like that around here."

"I'm sure there are plenty" said Mona, walking over to the table. "Look at this. Do you suppose we should wake him?"

The others came over.

"He doesn't look dangerous," said Charley. "I think he's a jester."

"Yes" said Lily. "And if we don't wake him, but we're supposed to for this challenge, then we'll never get home."

"Right" said Mona. "I'd better wake him, then. Um, excuse me."

He didn't stir, but then Charley prodded him and he spluttered to life.

"Oi, Mush, what's your game?" demanded the jester as he sat up. "You can't just go around prodding people like that."

"Sorry" stammered Charley. "It's just that we're on this..."

"Oh, you're that lot trying to find the Lord of Dreams, aren't you?" realised the jester. "Mona, Charley and Lily, isn't it, and your cat Fang? Well, my name's Motley. I'm supposed to help you, but to be honest I don't think I can right now."

"Why not?" asked Mona.

"Is something wrong?" Lily was concerned.

"Well, there is, as a matter of fact" Motley muttered sullenly. "Some idiot's nicked my laughter and I can't be a jester without it."

"How can somebody steal your laughter?" challenged Mona. "That's silly."

"I would have thought that you'd understand, of all people" snapped Motley. "Here in Knightmare it's just as easy to steal someone's laughter as it is his money."

"I suppose," said Mona grudgingly. "Well, perhaps we could find it for you."

"Oh, I know where it is!" Motley exclaimed. "But I can't get to it because it's trapped in a magic giant joker playing card. I've tried to get it back. I yelled *Snap* at it first because that's how I was released when I was trapped in a similar card some years ago, but it didn't work. None of my magic is strong enough to release it. If you were to get it, you'd have to find some kind of sorcerer. Are you willing to try for me?"

"Of course" said Mona. "If you aid us in reaching level three."

Motley reached into his jerkin and pulled out a normal-sized joker playing card and gave it to Mona.

"You can use this to summon me" he explained. "Just play it by dropping it to the ground and I'll appear. If you manage to retrieve my laughter, I'll certainly make sure

you can reach level three."

"You're sure this giant card is somewhere on the level?" Mona asked.

"Yes" said Motley. "I'm sure you'll come across it; don't worry. Well, thanks, guys; hopefully I'll see you later. Bye."

They left the room by the only door. The next room appeared to be empty apart from an ugly figurehead above the door.

"Yuck, gross!" exclaimed Lily.

"It looks like some kind of gremlin," said Mona.

"Hey, look" said Charley. "Is that something glistening on its nose?"

They went over and, sure enough, a necklace of yellow beads was hanging from its nose. Mona jumped up and grabbed it.

"It's pretty," said Lily.

"I think it's made of amber," said Mona, examining it.

They all jumped as a beam of energy leapt from the head and made a hole in the floor in front of them.

"Time to leave, I think" said Charley as the floor was blasted into smithereens around their feet. They ran through the door.

They blundered into a grand throne room. A queen dressed in grey was lounging on her throne, but rose to her feet as they made their entrance.

"How dare you enter the court of the witch queen in this manner?" she barked in outrage. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

They were taken aback at her manner, but Fang cantered up to her and rubbed himself against her legs.

"Oh, what a charming cat!" she exclaimed, delighted. "Hello, puss."

The queen sat down and let Fang sit on her lap. She stroked him and he began to purr.

"You must excuse my outburst," she said more kindly. "I am Greystagg, the queen of the witches. Who are you?"

"I'm Mona the Vampire," said Mona. "These are Zapman and Princess Giant. I'm sorry that we've disturbed you."

"Not at all, not all" smiled Greystagg, stroking Fang vigorously. "You have a lovely cat. What is his name?"

"Fang."

"I like cats and they like me" Greystagg went on. "One of my familiars is a cat; he's called Malkin. So, what can I do for you?"

"Well, we do have a kind of mission to fulfil" Charley chimed in.

"And what might that be?" smiled Greystagg kindly.

"We have to rescue Motley's laughter from a playing card" Mona told her.

"Oh, so that's Motley's laughter, is it?" laughed Greystagg. "I might have guessed. I've seen it nearby; you should have no trouble finding it. But releasing it..."

"Do you have a spell to do that?" asked Lily.

"Maybe" mused Greystagg. "What do you have that you're willing to trade?"

"Just this amber necklace" said Mona, holding it up.

"My dear girl, that's witch amber!" exclaimed Greystagg, eagerly snatching it up, releasing Fang as she did so. "Yes, you can have a spell for that. Now, let me think. You need to get the card to turn over and release the laughter. For this purpose, I gift you the spell FOLD."

"Thanks" said Mona.

"Thank you for the witch amber" smiled Greystagg. "Now, leave there." They exited through the door she indicated.

The next room was bathed in purple light, and contained shelves of ancient books, lots of laboratory equipment and a throne which was adorned with a glowing letter M.

"Looks like a wizard's room" noted Lily.

"Yes" agreed Mona. "I'll bet it belongs to Merlin. Remember, the Master Wizard Hordriss mentioned?"

"I guess we summon him by touching that M," Charley suggested.

"Good thinking, Zapman," Mona commended him. "Go for it!"

Charley touched the letter and it disappeared, heralding a brilliant flash of lightning and the arrival of Merlin on his throne. They noticed that he wore robes of green and gold, and the face behind the long white beard was kind and welcoming.

"Ah, so you've reached me at last" Merlin smiled at them. "Well done."

Now, we all know that Merlin's magic is vital to any winning quest, but do Mona, Charley and Lily have the wits to win the wizard's favour? Read the fourth chapter of *The Lord of Dreams* next issue to find out.

POETRY CORNER

A laudable quest from series 3 this time, which was brought to an end by undue haste in abandoning a spellbound potential ally.

Cliff and friends from Suffolk's coast,
Met a jester keen to boast.
With Motley's magic drinking charm,
The purple water caused no harm.
Through the tiny exit-way,
Brangwen's challenge made Cliff stay.
In the kitchen, Mellie's glee,
Gave food and steps, and passage free.
The serpent's tongue was long and pink,
Magic made it bridge the brink.
Mrs. Grimwold's canine moan,
Was soon appeased with juicy bone.
Down the well, the spin was scary,
Then the giant's foot was quite hairy!
Motley's riddle classed the doors,
A step was heard 'midst raven's caws.
Steps were mimed to bridge the pit,
Merlin's questions tested wit.
Past the goblins' hostile stance,
Magic caused McGrew to dance.
Away with undue haste Cliff dashed,
A menacing haunted sword flashed.
Without McGrew to fight the blade,
Cliff's bold quest was soon dismayed.
With life force gone, the quest was done.
The magic sword had had its fun.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Challenge Question: Series 7.

Famous Firsts:

Character met in the Dungeon.	Olgarth. (Episode 101.)
Dungeoneer.	David. (Episode 101.)
Clue object used.	Ruby. (Episode 101.)
Episode to feature level two.	Episode 103.
Character to kill a dungeoneer.	Lillith. (Episode 102.)
Winning dungeoneer.	Mark. (Episodes 203-205.)
Clue object wrongly left behind.	Magic lamp. (Episode 101.)
Episode to feature level three.	Episode 108.
Character to wield a weapon.	Cedric. (Episode 103.)
Female dungeoneer.	Maeve. (Episode 101.)
Dungeoneer with an all-girl team.	Claire. (Episodes 201-202.)
Person to say "Spellcasting."	Treguard. (Episode 101.)
Female winning dungeoneer.	Julie II. (Episodes 710-712.)
Mixed team winning dungeoneer.	Julian. (Episodes 211-213.)
Character to say "Dunshelm."	Velda. (Episode 311.)
Dungeoneer to reach level two.	Simon I. (Episode 103.)
Dungeoneer to reach level three.	Richard I. (Episode 108.)

Famous Lasts:

Character to be seen.	Smirkenorff. (Episode 810.)
Dungeoneer.	Oliver. (Episode 810.)
Character to talk in a spyglass sequence.	Lissard. (Episode 810.)
Episode to feature level two.	Episode 808.
Character to kill a dungeoneer.	Bhal-Shebah. (Episode 801.)
Winning dungeoneer.	Dunstan. (Episodes 808-810.)
Character to speak.	Lord Fear. (Episode 810.)
Episode to feature Pickle.	Episode 615.
Character to accept a bar of gold.	Honesty Bartram. (Episode 806.)
Female dungeoneer.	Rebecca. (Episodes 807-808.)
Dungeoneer with a mixed team.	Richard III. (Episode 801.)
Person to award a spell that we see cast.	Sidriss. (Episode 810.)
Female winning dungeoneer.	Julie II. (Episodes 710-712.)
Mixed team winning dungeoneer.	Julian. (Episodes 211-213.)
Character to say "Knightmare."	Treguard. (Episode 714.)
Dungeoneer to die in level three.	Nathan. (Episodes 804-806.)
Episode to feature Hordriss.	Episode 810.